4/28/70

Dear Howard,

It had been my hope to find a relatively relaxed time to answer your letter with thought and care, I do know how you feel as, to a degree, you seem to understand how I do, and do not want, in haste, to make you feel worse or to express myself less lucidly than I might, thus, perhaps, causing you needless pain. But I have an unexpected large job that is pressing that I must do immediately. It requires the analysis of about a thousand pages and making recommendations based on what I detect or think I do. So, before starting that, as I should have today but couldn't for other reasons (the CBS-LBJ thing and the Skolnick matter took some phone time), I do begin a reply, at least, and will write until I get too tired or until I complete it.

Perfection is not a condition of man, Howard. We all makes mistakes, and intention is often irrelevant. I've made more than I'd like to have made. I fear I make them more with younger people, especially those I like. I did with you, as I acknolwedged, and I should have been more firm when you were getting into areas where I was satisfied there was risk, for I knew the danger of the risk outweighed the maximum possible benefit. In this sense, the Skolnick fiasco is my fault also, for I should have been more firm with the friend who is directly responsible for it. However, while younger people tend to think of the "generation gap", older people tend to think in terms of the needs of those younger, or their freedom to learn and grow with experience (which nothing replaces). In discussion with that fellow, I made it clear I wanted no publicity and why. He knew it, as he acknolwedges - indeed, as he told Skolnick, who seems to have agreed, as part of his deceit and misrepresentation. However, because I my liking for that man, and because he had helped me, instead of immediately and unequivocally, perhaps dictatorially, saying absolutely no and then not discussing it I erred.

You may not really know what John sought. He is eaten with ego, but he is neither stupid nor incompetent. I am by no means certain I know. I think I know his objectives. I am awaiting the appraisals of Dick and Gary before I express my own. But of some I am reasonably confident, or others I have only suspicions. In time, after Dick and Gary and I have chewed it over, you'll know what I think, anyway, and probably what the others do.

By now you know he left Phila and returned to see you, which is costly and time-consuming and not the kind of thing a busy man does for no reason. John is something less than generous. Two years ago I went to KY to swing some people for him, and I did quite a lot of work when he loused up his own suit. But when Gary asked a very simple task of him, including the printing of two pictures in duplicate, he messed that up and the cost of the four prints was $16.00, as I recall. One set was to come with me, and they did-with a bill, after all that. So, John is not the kind to waste money or time, as he sees it.

The essential question is not of hurt of me but of endangering my part of the work some of us do, in varying degrees. Some of it, as you should know, is rather ticklish. Some of it, if John steals he, he'll mess up, as you should have detected, for even in his own specialty his knowledge is deficient. While there was danger of personal hurt to me, the more important thing was knowing what I had worked so hard to get and am still laboring to get. This includes one of the things he is going crazy trying to get. He wouldn't know what it really means if I were to give it to him.

Your expression of your feelings is not sob stuff. I do not think you regard it as that and I do not think you should so refer to it. I knew this

had to disturb you much, as it did me. There are variations between people, some of personality, some of age, and it is not always possible to estimate the amount of perturbation accurately. I also suggest this was no less painful for me, esp. since my work is what was involved and I have an anxiety condition added to the many problems, some of which are known to you. In any event, there was no joy in it for anyone. My point here is that you should not be ashmed of an honest emotion, should not apologize for it. There would be something wrong only if you felt no such emotion. Unfortunately, in other areas, as you live your life, more or varying degree are inevitable.

Connaly pix. You are right. You referred to his having an X-ray showing 3 frags and I must have said picture.

Your 399 picture: I'd appreciate a copy of the covering letter to attach to it and a note from you saying you printed for me the print you gave me from it. I have a dupe I ordered from the Archives, but you blew up the part I will use. I have a single 8x10 now with my two and it. Dick, incidently, still disagrees. If Nichols' is at an angle or with lighting that helps, of course I'll want that and I'll keep pushing with the Archives for it, each time allowing the passage of enough time to make it look like what they really are in court. If you get a copy from them, let me know, for I have ordered it often. I'd also like to see yours as soon as possible if they fail to supply me. Perhaps you indicate elsewhere John is giving you a copy.

When you talk about the base you do so without knowledge of what I had told John, for I had trusted him. He may not have caught the alteration, but he sure knew what I was up to with the first picture and he'd have to be a blithering idiot not to catch any change. I hope he is! One of the importances of his, which dates to 5/68, is if it shows this, as you say, for that dates the time it happened to before 5/68 (unless Dick is right).

The Bell thing and the Connally fragments and X-rays are in HH. He got this when he first read it, the late winter or early Spring of ~~1967~~ 1968, though he doesn't tell you that. If he carried it farther, fine. It would have been more comforting if he had done this, assuming he did, in what once was the customary way of scholarship.

(When you refer to certain paragraphs of my letters, I am not taking the time to get them and check, for I'd not get done if I did. But there is nothing personal, no intended personal insult, in any of it.)

Dick has the same problem I have. He wants to help people, which is proper. What is wrong is the high percentage of shady characters. And he is not as inhibited and concerned as I for he has none of the literary stake and is not engaged in the rather ticklish things that occupy me. So, he could more easily, without feeling any concern, tell John things. He also knew the large amount of work I did for John.

If you do not now think of things you did not report of this meeting- and I think elsewhere in this letter you report some-please bear it in mind and if anything later assumes significance, please let Dick and me know promptly. Or if it seems like it might if you had knowledge you might not-just anything suspicious.

Maybe I one time did consider forged X-Rays. If I did, it is so long ago I have forgotten it, and I do not think I ever really did. Several efforts were made to send me in that direction, but I never took it. I had a helluva fight with Garrison and his staff, Salandria and his pals over this. I held the contrary conviction. I think I'll never be without the consequences of that success. Terrible

terible emotional strain and experience. This is what got us into Halleck's court. But what a fight it was! I alone held there was no possibility of forgery or that if it happened, the forgery was so incompetent it proved them wrong.

Howard, do not feel that yours is the only ego that occasionally needs deflating. We all have them and they all need it. You have just had less experience with the unpleasantness of it. But it is also an essential, for men who would work constructively and keep within reasonable, rational limits. It is also hard to swallow ones ego, but that also must be learned, and it is no more congenial than an ulcer.

It is also unpleasant that we must be honorable, that we must keep confidences. This is not ever easy. It always requires special effort. And you've had less time to learn these things. You will. But until then, you must expect that when there is danger and others know, you will be told, how often depending on the state of mind of whoever tells you and his appraisal of the danger. Sometimes there is no time for diplomacy.

I think it would be better if you waited to learn from Nichols whatever you asked of him. I also encourage you to not take it as unquestioned because he says it and because he has his qualifications. Check his opinions. If he has offered a copy of his opiture (I may be wrong in thinking you said something of this), by all means, Dick and I should see it. There is no such thing as an "exclusive" on an Archives picture. I think the first use should be that of the one for whom taken, but the Archives doesn't even go that far. My purposes, as you know, are not to steal his picture, nor would Dick. With Lifton, there is little chance he'll ever give you anything of value. Certainly he'll not give you what others do not have. I do not know that he has anything of his own of first-rank value, frankly, and his beleifs are simply incredible. I think it is better to dub the tape than to send the original to him. But, if it gets lost, it should be possible to replace. I'd been promised a copy I never got. I'll ask Gary if he know anyone who has it. I have only academic interest in it, something of no great value but of possible historic interest in a large file.

I still do not have the memo of transfer. It has been directed to me but is being suppressed by GSA. When I get it, you, Dick and Gary will know what it says and means. I've already indicated my knowledge of what it contains over and above a film receipt and to whom it was given, by whom signed. I have just done something new, but there is no point in going into that. First I'll have to see if this approach accomplishes anything. However, you should also understand there is sometimes an advantage in duplicating requests. When this is done, it should be done after consultation or by request. You should recall some cases of the recent past. But not, ever, one-sidedly, for there is always with important things the hazard of crossing something up. CE397/CD371: You can have the Bahmer letterto me if you need it. I presume you recall it. But I think it would be best to leave this for my suit... Your questions on the Nichols base photo:yes on all counts. Tell them he has shown it to you (and order two copies. I'll get my own and we'll have this one for Dick if it is forthcoming. Meanwhile, I can study this before-sending it to him.)

There was a typo. As you know, I feel I cannot take time to correct the many, though I know it wastes the time of others. I meant not "erase" byt "trace". I have the skeletal chart you got for me. Yours and mine are thus identical and I can overlay a sketch on tracing paper. Or, make your tracing and add this, which might be better.

Gotta stop. I do appreciate your letter, I commend you and respect you more for your self-analysis and a basic integrity which isapparent. I went to add one other thing: you are dealing with mature men and being treated as an equal. If this also places greater than usual burden on your years, try and be prepared to react above your years and experience. Best regards.